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FESTIVAL NOTES

DeJohnette's car 'totalled' on way to Montreal

HE'S FINE, FESTIVAL'S MENARD SAYS

Ray Charles gives glimpses of his greatness, and his bass player displays diversity

Too close for comfort: Drummer **Jack DeJohnette** was involved in an auto accident Wednesday on his way to present his Invitation Series, which began last night at the Monument National. The accident took place as DeJohnette's car and van were approaching the U.S. side of the border (he lives in New York state). According to festival co-director André Ménard, DeJohnette's car was "totalled, but he's fine." Ménard noted jocularly: "He'll come here and give the performance of a lifetime. Another festival legend is born." All kidding aside, the pallor of Ménard's face indicated serious relief.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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There are moments in a **Ray Charles** show when you catch the fleetingest glimpse of the man who changed popular music. As he played those sweet blue-note fills in Georgia On My Mind at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier Wednesday night, The Genius was in the room. When he let out a joyful "Yaaoooo!" in Busted and tackled Stranger In My Own Home Town with authority, smiles lit up the hall. But those moments come and go so quickly you're left uncertain whether you saw them at all. For most of Charles's 15-song, 70-minute set, shtick buried substance and tepid ballads replaced absent classics. Even What'd I Say, one of the coolest songs ever recorded, was tossed off as an audience-participation vamp.

The 17-piece Ray Charles Orchestra played with complete professionalism but little soul. As for the backup singers, it seems unlikely Charles has ever assembled a more bored-looking group of Raelettes. And, please, someone get Ray to a real piano so he'll stop noodling with the note-bending device on that Yamaha KX88!

BERNARD PERUSSE

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Bass player **Tom Fowler** has backed two certified geniuses: Ray Charles (who virtually owns the trademark) and Frank Zappa (who died a decade ago). After Wednesday's concert by the cos-

ALLEN MCINNIS THE GAZETTE

Ray Charles played at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier Wednesday night.

mic Ray, Fowler brought his laptop to the bar at the Hotel Wyndham and demonstrated a custom-made program, with Braille screen pop-ups and keyboards, that allows Charles to compose, arrange and listen to a finished orchestrated product "without any interference from a (expletive deleted) MD (musical director)." The raspy-voiced Fowler also played works-in-progress from his band From Utopia, which plays Uncle Frank's tunes and originals in the spiky style. Talk about the best from two very different worlds.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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Carlo Pagnotti, the big cheese of the Umbria Jazz Festival, Italy's largest, rolled into town on Wednesday. He headed straight for **Tamango's Urban Tap** (playing nightly at the Cinquieme Saile through June 30), with an eye to bringing it to the winter edition of the Umbria event, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in the medieval town of Perugia starting July 11. Boys from Egea, the official record label of the Italian festival, also arrived for their third straight year here. Moves are afoot for a large Italian splash at next year's 12th anniversary of Montreal's festival.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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Forty years ago, **Marcel Barbeau** danced to jazz as he painted in his New York City loft. This year, the 78-year-old Quebec artist graces the Festival Gallery with a limited edition (100) silk screen of Django Blue, a work depicting brightly coloured shapes floating Calder-like on a blue background. At the vernissage on Wednesday the Charlevoix native, who's lived in Paris since 1957, accepted honours not with words but with a weird but charming extemporaneous tune.

"This work is very emotional and structured at the same time, like Django," said Barbeau, a signer of the famous 1948 Refus Global (as was Jean-Paul Riopelle, whose work also appears in the gallery, along with that of Alfred Pellan, Frederic Back, Miles Davis, Tony Bennett and festival poster designer Yves Archambault).

As for Davis, Barbeau noted: "It's no accident Miles was interested in art, because all his music is very designed." Festival co-director Alain Simard noted that more than 100,000 people – "people who probably wouldn't normally go to a gallery" – visit the gallery, in a tent on the esplanade of Place des Arts every year. Singers Richard Séguin and Raoul Duguay were among those at the vernissage.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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